

INSPECTION REPORT

**BIRCHINGTON CHURCH OF ENGLAND
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Park Lane, Birchington

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118693

Acting Headteacher: Mrs. L. Gallagher

Reporting inspector: Mr. A. Everix
23079

Dates of inspection: 6th – 10th November 2000

Inspection number: 225062

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Birchington Church of England Primary School Park Lane Birchington Kent
Postcode:	CT7 OAS
Telephone number:	01843 841046
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr. R. Hinge
Date of previous inspection:	26 th January 1998

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		Design and technology	The school's results and pupils' achievements
		Physical education	Teaching and learning
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			Pupils' welfare, health and safety
			Partnership with parents and carers
John Linstead 20948	Team inspector	Science	Quality and range of learning opportunities
		Art and design	
Robin Coulthard 11746	Team inspector	English	
		Geography	
		History	
Marianne Harris 23288	Team inspector	Areas of learning for children in the foundation stage	
		Music	
		English as an additional language	
		Special educational needs	
Sheila Roberts 20760	Team inspector	Equality of opportunity	Leadership and management
		Mathematics	
		Religious education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Birchington Primary School is a Church of England controlled school, teaching pupils between the ages of 4 and 11. The school includes a Dyslexia Unit funded by the local education authority. At the time of the inspection there were 358 pupils on the school's roll. Pupils come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Thirteen come from minority ethnic backgrounds and six are taught English as an additional language. Thirty-nine per cent of pupils are on the special educational needs register, a proportion well above the national average. Eight pupils have statements for their needs. A substantial number of pupils leave and join the school during each year, for example, last year 43 pupils left and 39 joined, other than at the usual times. Currently, children enter the reception class with skills typical of those nationally, although in past years they have been a little lower. Six new staff were appointed at the start of the school year, including an acting headteacher.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is currently providing a satisfactory level of education. Many initiatives and changes by the acting headteacher are increasing the school's effectiveness. Overall, the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements are satisfactory. The school is providing satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- It is very well led and managed by the acting headteacher.
- The teaching of pupils in the Dyslexia Unit is very good.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is well organised and they make good progress towards their individual targets.
- Overall, the teaching of numeracy is good and is particularly effective in the mathematics sets for older pupils.
- Good strategies are used for teaching pupils to work and play well together.
- Pupils are taught to understand right from wrong and behave responsibly.

What could be improved

- The overall quality of teaching, which was less than satisfactory in 9 per cent of lessons.
- Pupils' attainment in writing.
- Standards in information technology which, although improving, are below those expected at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Curriculum planning for the mixed age classes.
- Homework and reports of pupils' progress so that parents are in a better position to help their children.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in January 1998 and was judged to have serious weaknesses. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. This judgement reflects rapid improvement in many aspects of the school, especially in its leadership and management, during the past few months. There is significant improvement in the quality of teaching but there remain issues to address. The progress of pupils at Key Stage 2 is now judged to be satisfactory overall although it is uneven and depends on the quality of teaching. The provision for information technology is considerably better. Financial planning is now sound. Pupils' attitudes to school have improved. Work for pupils with special educational needs is better planned and they now make good progress. Standards in English are

similar but there are weaknesses in pupils' writing. Pupils' progress in mathematics at Key Stage 2 has improved. In other subjects, standards are average and similar to the last inspection, apart from in music, art and design and technology which are now satisfactory. Providing that the positive developments in the last few months are sustained, the school is in a good position to improve.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	D	B	D	B
mathematics	D	D	D	D
science	E	E	E	D

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Although the high number of pupils with special educational needs influences the school's grades in different year groups, results indicate that there has been some under-achievement in pupils' performance over the past few years, especially in science. Comparative grades were not available for the 2000 tests at the time of the inspection. However, results were similar to those of 1999 in English and mathematics but significantly higher in science. In English, inspection evidence shows that attainment is close to that expected nationally in reading, speaking and listening at the end of both key stages, but below average in writing. Although this weakness is now being successfully addressed through improved teaching, pupils' writing skills, especially in punctuation and the ability to write in depth, are not high enough. In mathematics, attainment is higher than indicated by the Key Stage 2 test results. It is broadly average at the end of both key stages. The continued impact of the National Numeracy Strategy and good teaching in the mathematics sets for older pupils have had a positive impact on standards. In science, attainment is now similar to that expected nationally and reflects the improved 2000 results. However, work in this subject is not always challenging for the most able pupils and this limits their achievements. Challenging targets for 2001 test results have been set in English and mathematics. Pupils are on target to achieve them providing recent improvements in pupils' writing are maintained. Although recent progress in information technology has been good due to effective learning in the newly equipped computer suite, there is some way to go before the oldest pupils achieve national standards in all aspects of the subject. In all other subjects, standards are broadly in line with those expected nationally.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Nearly all pupils have a positive attitude to learning and enjoy coming to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Most pupils behave well in lessons. Occasionally, younger junior pupils find it difficult to settle to tasks and their learning slows. Behaviour around the school is very good. Although there were an exceptionally high number of exclusions during the last school year, these have considerably reduced since the acting headteacher was appointed.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships throughout the school are good. Pupils get on well with each other and with adults. Pupils learn to work well together and listen to what each other has to say. As they get older, pupils take additional responsibilities seriously and carry them out sensibly.
Attendance	This is in line with the national average. A few junior pupils arrive late in the morning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Of the teaching observed, 14 per cent was very good or better, 31 per cent good, 46 per cent satisfactory and 9 per cent less than satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed in lessons for children under five. The range in the quality of teaching and learning was similar at Key Stages 1 and 2; however, there were often significant differences between classes in the same year group. The best lessons were well structured, with challenging activities that inspired pupils to learn. Teachers' expectations were high; consequently pupils produced a substantial quantity of good quality work. In lessons which were less than satisfactory, teachers' explanations were not clear, lesson planning lacked focus and work was not well matched to the pupils' needs. On the whole the school is satisfactorily meeting the needs of its pupils. Teaching in the Dyslexia Unit is very good and other pupils with special educational needs learn well, especially when taught in small groups or supported by learning assistants. Overall, the teaching observed in numeracy lessons was good and in literacy it was satisfactory. However, at Key Stage 1, pupils are not expected to produce enough written work. Overall, the quality of teachers' marking in the school is unsatisfactory. Simple mistakes are not always corrected and not enough information is given to pupils on what they are doing well or how they can improve.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory with an appropriate balance of subjects. Literacy and numeracy strategies have been successfully implemented. In some subjects, planning for the mixed aged classes, is inadequate as some pupils could repeat or miss parts of the curriculum. A good range of extra curricular activities is provided, especially for sport. Contacts with other schools through the “Virtual Education Action Zone” are helping teachers to share ideas and resources that benefit pupils.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good in the Dyslexia Unit. Pupils benefit from high quality specialist teaching. Good in the rest of the school. These pupils are effectively supported and make good gains in their learning.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Appropriate specialist teaching is provided for the few pupils who need support.
Provision for pupils’ personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory spiritual and cultural provision. Good social and moral development. Pupils are taught why actions are right or wrong and how to play and work constructively and sensibly. More could be done to promote spiritual development in lessons and to learn about other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory provision for pupils’ safety and welfare. There are effective procedures for promoting good behaviour. Good information from assessment is used to support pupils’ learning in English, mathematics and science but is less effective in other subjects. The partnership with parents has improved recently and is satisfactory overall. However, there are weaknesses in reporting pupils’ progress and in the setting of homework.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The acting headteacher is providing very good leadership and giving clear direction to the school’s improvement. She has succeeded in establishing good staff morale and a positive ethos. Senior management and co-ordinators share the commitment to school improvement. Several are new and are developing their role in raising standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body fulfils its statutory duties. Governors are supportive of the school and understand its strengths and weaknesses.
The school’s evaluation of its performance	Test results are analysed and weaknesses identified. This information has been used this term to help address areas of under-achievement.

	The school development plan is based well on an evaluation of many aspects of school life.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning is sound. The school seeks to obtain the best value for money when purchasing equipment and services. The very spacious building and grounds are used efficiently. There are enough qualified teachers. Good levels of support staff are usually deployed well in classes. Sufficient, good quality resources are used well to support learning in most lessons.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The many improvements made by the acting headteacher. • Their children like school. • Staff are approachable when parents have a problem. • Their children are helped to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The establishment of a permanent, effective headteacher. • The amount of homework. • The way the school works with them particularly in keeping them informed about their children's progress. • The teaching of pupils of average ability in some classes, especially girls.

Inspectors agree with the above positive views expressed by most parents. The school was being very effectively led during the inspection. Inspectors agree that the rigorous approach to managing the school, established by the acting headteacher, needs to be maintained. Too many inconsistencies amongst teachers in the setting of homework reduce its effectiveness. There are satisfactory arrangements for parents to consult teachers during the year. However, pupils' reports do not give enough clear information on individual standards compared with those nationally, nor where pupils need to improve. The school has identified under-achievement of some average older pupils, including the performance of girls in mathematics. Through teaching based on the setting and reviewing of individual targets, and by regrouping pupils, the school has taken effective action to address this. Inspectors did not judge this aspect of teaching to be an issue in the lessons observed.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Currently, children enter the reception class with skills broadly in line with those typical nationally, although in past years they have been slightly below this. Children make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage and the majority are on target to achieve the early learning goals by the time they enter Key Stage 1.
2. Over recent years, test results for 11 year olds have been about average in English, below average in mathematics and well below average in science. Overall, the school's results have increased at a rate similar to the national trend. For 7 year olds, recent results in reading and writing were below the national average and in mathematics they were average.
3. In the 1999 tests for 11 year old pupils' results in English and mathematics were below the national average and in science they were well below average. Compared with similar schools, results were

above average for English and below average for mathematics and science. For the 2000 tests, national comparisons were not available during the inspection. However, results were similar to those of 1999 in English and mathematics. They were significantly higher in science with 85 per cent of pupils reaching or exceeding the national level. Results of the 1999 tests for 7 year olds were well below the national average in reading and writing and below average in mathematics. For similar schools, they were well below average in reading below average in writing and average in mathematics. Mathematics results were similar in 2000 and there were small improvements in reading and writing scores.

4. Test results are influenced by the number of pupils with special educational needs in each year group. For example, one third of the pupils who took the Key Stage 1 tests in 1999 and 2000 were on the higher levels of the special educational needs register and required individual education plans. Nevertheless, results over time indicate some under-achievement by pupils at both key stages. Using a thorough analysis of all its test data, the school has identified several pupils, particularly of average ability, whom they judge capable of achieving higher standards. Effective action has been taken through the setting of work linked to individual pupil targets in literacy and numeracy. These are being reviewed regularly.

5. A high number of pupils leave and join the school other than at the usual times. For example, in the last school year, 43 left the school and 39 joined. This makes overall comparisons between pupils' performance in the school's published Key Stage 1 tests, and pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 unreliable. The inspection team undertook an analysis of the data, held by the school, on current Year 6 pupil's individual performance in various tests. This shows that, overall, pupils are making satisfactory progress in relation to their individual results in the Key Stage 1 tests.

6. Test results, and the school's own observations, show that girls are not always achieving as well as boys in mathematics especially in the upper half of Key Stage 2. To raise their achievement girls are taught as a separate set in Year 6. Inspection observations show this to be a currently effective arrangement for improving girls' confidence and progress in mathematics.

7. Inspection evidence shows that pupils' attainment in English is below average at both key stages. This is due to weaknesses in pupils' writing. The school is aware of this and has introduced several strategies, such as focused extended writing sessions, to raise standards. This is having a good impact where teaching is strong, but in a few classes, expectations of pupils are not high enough. Reading has improved at both key stages, compared with the school's recent test results, and is now in line with standards expected nationally. The raised profile of books in the school, the continued impact of the literacy hour and the good progress made in reading by many pupils with special educational needs, are likely reasons for improved attainment. Speaking and listening skills are in line with those expected nationally.

8. In mathematics, attainment is judged to be in line with that expected nationally. This reflects overall test results over the past few years at Key Stage 1. At the end of Key Stage 2, standards are judged to be higher than indicated by test results. This is mainly due to very effective teaching in the mathematics ability sets in Years 5 and 6. Pupils in Year 6 of average and above average attainment, are making particularly rapid progress.

9. Standards in science are broadly average. This reflects the improved 2000 test results where 85 per cent of pupils attained national levels or above. However, work is often set at one level, which challenges most pupils but limits the achievements of the most able.

10. Attainment in information technology meets expectations at Key Stage 1 but is below that

expected at Key Stage 2. Teaching in the new, well-equipped technology room is raising attainment but there is some way to go before national standards are achieved in all aspects of the subject.

11. Attainment in religious education meets the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. In the aspects seen of art, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education, pupils attain standards appropriate for their ages.

12. Pupils with special educational needs are effectively supported in school and they make good gains in their learning. The few pupils who are learning English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress and are appropriately supported by the language support service. There is not enough evidence to judge the overall progress of gifted or talented pupils. However, in mathematics a few older pupils have been identified as very able and more advanced teaching materials obtained from a local secondary school. These pupils were making very good progress in their mathematics set. Pupils with talents in sport have several competitive opportunities to develop their skills.

13. Taking all factors into account, pupils' current overall achievement is satisfactory. However, progress is uneven because of differences in the quality of teaching between some classes in the same year groups.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Pupils' attitudes to school are good and contribute to the progress being made. They enjoy coming to school, are keen to learn and are well motivated. Most children are confident and outgoing, keen to answer questions and take part in lessons. In most lessons, they settle to written tasks without fuss and work with sustained concentration. Nearly all parents agree that their children enjoy coming to school.

15. Overall, behaviour is good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour were judged to be good or better in two-thirds of lessons and very good in one seventh. Pupils respond quickly to their teachers' requests for attention and listen well to instructions. In a small minority of lessons, mainly in Year 3, behaviour fell below the standard expected, with some pupils failing to follow orderly classroom routines. Consequently, pupils' rate of learning slowed. Behaviour in the playground and around the school is very good. Pupils are courteous, speak politely to adults and hold doors open for them. Their behaviour in assembly, even when having to wait for classes to arrive and depart, is exemplary. Pupils are aware of the school rules and of teachers' expectations and they respond well to the school's system of house point rewards. Behaviour has improved since the last inspection when it was described as satisfactory. Although the number of exclusions was exceptionally high during the last school year, these have been much reduced since the current acting headteacher was appointed.

16. Relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and staff are good. Pupils socialise well at break times and work co-operatively in class. They respect and value the contributions of other pupils by listening attentively and making their own comments when appropriate. Pupils carry out responsibilities sensibly in class and around the school. As they get older, pupils take their increased responsibilities seriously, for example, when acting as librarians or house captains and when helping staff during wet playtimes

17. Levels of attendance are satisfactory, being in line with the national average. There is more absence in the summer term, and analysis of registers confirms that this is due to a high number of pupils being taken out of school by parents for family holidays in term time. A number of Key Stage 2 pupils arrive late for morning registration. This lack of punctuality is largely attributed to the difference in the starting time for younger and older pupils, so that some older pupils only arrive for class once their younger brothers or sisters have gone in to school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

18. The quality of teaching observed ranged from excellent to poor. Three per cent was excellent, 11 per cent very good, 31 per cent good, 46 per cent satisfactory and 9 per cent less than satisfactory. The last figure includes one poorly taught lesson. Effective lessons occurred in all year groups. There were instances of less than satisfactory teaching at Key Stage 1 and in Years 4 and 6. The overall quality of teaching and learning has improved satisfactorily since the last inspection. Nearly one in four lessons was then judged to be less than satisfactory. However, in some year groups there is significant variation in the quality of teaching between classes. This was especially evident in three of the year groups at Key Stage 2. On occasions, the same topic was taught in a more challenging way in one class compared with the other. An example, of this is given in the religious education section of this report.

19. The quality of teaching for children under five is satisfactory. Teaching and learning in the Dyslexia Unit is very good. Further details of teaching in these parts of the school can be found in the relevant sections of this report. Pupils with special educational needs are taught effectively. The special needs co-ordinator manages a large team of learning support assistants who are well qualified to support pupils at Key Stage 2, providing specialised individual or small group support. At Key Stage 1, classroom assistants support the younger pupils well and work in a more general way with a wide range of pupils within the class. Work is well planned, based on careful assessment of achievement and need. Suitable programmes of work are used to teach the pupils effectively and ensure they make good learning gains. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language receive suitable support from the authority team. Each pupil is assessed to determine the level of help required in lessons. The class teacher's planning is followed to ensure each pupil has the same opportunity for learning as the rest of the class.

20. The best teaching was highly motivating and ensured that all pupils made maximum progress in the time available. This was evident in an excellent numeracy lesson in Year 6. Firm discipline, mixed with humour, created a relaxed working atmosphere in the class. Through skilful questioning, which involved all pupils in the opening session, pupils were keen to accept a new challenge involving work with percentages. The teacher's expectations were high. She insisted on the correct use of mathematical language and provided work which was challenging but ensured success. Pupils showed a high level of interest and worked productively for the whole time. The end of the session was used very effectively to assess pupils' learning.

21. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the curriculum is satisfactory. When teachers display high levels of competence, pupils' acquisition of skills and knowledge is rapid. For example, in two physical education lessons in the upper half of Key Stage 2, pupils were successfully taught correct techniques for controlling balls with their feet or with a hockey stick. In one lesson they were constantly made aware of the need to create space and think ahead in a game. Consequently, these pupils achieved standards above those expected for their ages. In contrast, in a Year 6 science lesson, the teacher did not use scientific vocabulary well and explanations were unclear; consequently pupils did not have a good understanding of what a "solution" is. Overall, the teaching of basic skills in numeracy is good and in literacy it is satisfactory. Numeracy skills are taught very effectively in the ability sets in Years 5 and 6.

22. Weaknesses in teachers' planning for children under five are discussed in the section on the Foundation Stage. At Key Stages 1 and 2, teachers' lesson planning is satisfactory overall. A good new format has been introduced but there are variations in its use. Where it is used well it has a positive impact on learning. For example, one Year 3 teacher's detailed plans clearly identified the

activities for each ability group, showed timings for each part of the lesson and the role of other adults in the room. This led to well-structured lessons where pupils' pace of learning was good.

23. Teachers' expectations of pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall. At both key stages there were examples of teachers challenging pupils and expecting them to work hard during lessons. However, at Key Stage 1 not enough written work is expected from pupils and this restricts their achievements in English. Teaching methods are satisfactory. Numeracy and literacy lessons nearly always follow the recommended structures, often with good introductions and appropriate session at the end in which pupils share their learning.

24. Teachers usually manage their classes effectively. In the best lessons, a balanced use of praise and firmness ensures that pupils' concentrate on their tasks. Occasionally, the teacher's voice was raised. This was not effective in disciplining pupils or maintaining a studious atmosphere. The good use of time, resulting in a fast pace to pupils learning, was a strong feature in the most successful lessons. In some weaker lessons teachers talked for too long during the introductory session and pupils became restless. Classroom assistants usually support learning well. However, in a few weaker literacy lessons, they were not deployed effectively during group work and for some pupils' the rate of learning was slow.

25. Teachers usually assess pupils well during lessons and correct any misunderstandings as they arise. Although it varies between teachers and subjects, the quality of marking is unsatisfactory overall at Key Stages 1 and 2. In the best examples, teachers praise what pupils do well and identify where they have gone wrong. This helps pupils to understand the success of their work. In many other cases work is just ticked, and comments, such as those asking the pupils to repeat or correct work, are not followed up by the teacher. In the worst examples, basic spelling errors are not corrected.

26. Although homework was set for pupils during the inspection there are too many inconsistencies in its use between classes, especially at Key Stage 2. This limits its effectiveness in supporting work at school and involving parents in their children's learning.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

27. The school provides a satisfactory range of learning opportunities. Statutory requirements are fully met. The teaching of swimming has been reintroduced this school year for younger Key Stage 2 pupils. The school provides a sufficiently broad curriculum and has successfully introduced the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies.

28. The school's use of national guidance in most subjects has helped to raise the quality of curriculum planning compared with the last inspection. However, evidence from past work and in weaker lessons shows that teachers do not always use the guidance well to plan lessons for pupils' different abilities. This is particularly evident in science where there is often a lack of extra challenge to boost the most able pupils' progress. The "setting" of pupils in Years 5 and 6 for mathematics is very successful because work and teaching approaches are particularly well matched to the needs of pupils.

29. Although the school is committed to providing all pupils with equal curriculum opportunities, planning does not ensure this, especially in the mixed-age classes at Key Stages 1 and 2. Planning in the key areas of numeracy and literacy is satisfactory in these classes. However, in many other subjects it does not ensure that pupils will not repeat nor miss part of the curriculum. In addition, some teachers have short French lessons on their timetables and others do not.

30. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. A comprehensive drug education policy includes a detailed scheme of work. Science topics on 'My Family', 'Health and Growing' and, in Year 6, sex education, contribute well to this aspect of education. Good use is made of 'circle time' to share personal and social issues. Outside speakers, such as the police and railway personnel, contribute to pupils' understanding by outlining ways of 'keeping safe'. The school's links with the community are satisfactory. For example, the choir takes part in a Rotary Concert and pupils participate in sporting and poetry competitions. Pupils learn about the local area in geography and history. The school has benefited from sports equipment provided by a local manufacturer and from links with a large chemical company.

31. There are effective links with other schools, including those with pre-school groups and many sporting contacts. Links with secondary schools are being developed to enhance work in information technology and mathematics. A particularly good feature is the school's participation in the Virtual Education Action Zone initiative. Pupils and staff share ideas with local and other schools through "video conferencing" and e-mail. Funds have helped to provide playground resources, a part-time computer technician and a learning assistant. Helpful training has been provided on the development of pupils' 'emotional intelligence' and the raising of their self-esteem.

32. The school provides a good range of after school and lunchtime clubs. These include needlework, French, choir, computing, homework and a number of sports clubs. As they get older there are good opportunities for pupils to compete in matches or other events. The school owes much to the expertise and commitment of the site manager who coaches pupils in football and cricket in his own time. Other activities, including instrumental tuition provided by visiting tutors, can be paid for.

33. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. It is good in assemblies where a calm atmosphere for reflection is created and pupils are encouraged to think about many issues, such as how their actions influence others. Pupils have some chances to admire achievements of historical figures such as Florence Nightingale in history, but opportunities for the discussion of spiritual aspects in other subjects are limited.

34. The school's 'golden rules' form the basis of the good provision for pupils' moral development. These rules for good conduct are thoroughly considered by all pupils at the beginning of each year. Adults regularly emphasise what is acceptable conduct and why. Circle time provides many opportunities for discussing what is right and wrong at levels suitable for each age group. Pupils are taught to consider others through fund-raising for local and world charities. They donate 'love in a box' gifts for refugees, support Poppy Day, and have raised funds for research into cystic fibrosis. Pupils provide and distribute harvest gifts to local elderly people.

35. Provision for pupils' social development is good. From a young age, pupils are taught to take turns and play well together in lessons. For example, in information technology lessons pupils learn to share equipment and make decisions. As they get older pupils exercise responsibility in various ways. They act as librarians, Year 6 pupils take charge of younger pupils at lunchtime, and older pupils monitor behaviour during wet play times. A 'power patrol' saves electricity where possible, and a 'green team' is active in keeping the school tidy. The school council provides a useful forum for pupils to express their views about school and to make suggestions about its organisation. For example, when issues in questionnaires completed by other pupils at the school are discussed. Older pupils' social skills are enhanced by opportunities to share lunch with the headteacher and some other staff. After school clubs, especially sport, make a positive contribution to social development.

36. Cultural provision is satisfactory. A range of clubs for sport, music, French and needlework support pupils' cultural development. The range of visits and visitors to the school make a satisfactory

contribution. For example, during the inspection a ‘Victorian lady’ showed many artefacts and items of clothing which greatly helped pupils to understand the culture of that time. The millennium celebrations and the school’s 150th anniversary included drama activities and the involvement of the Dickens Society. This improved pupils’ understanding of the local culture. Some multicultural awareness is cultivated through geography and in religious education by studying faiths of the world. However, opportunities for developing a greater understanding of Europe and other World cultures are limited.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

37. The school takes good care of its pupils. Teachers and support staff know the pupils well and provide a caring environment. Break-times are appropriately supervised. Midday supervisors make a good contribution to the care of pupils and good order at lunchtime. There are good systems for administering routine medicines, and useful training for staff provided in the emergency use of an “epipen” to assist a child with severe nut allergies. There are satisfactory arrangements for dealing with minor bumps and injuries, and the recording of these has improved since the previous inspection. However, none of the present teaching, office or learning support staff have current certificates for first aid training. There are satisfactory arrangements for dealing with child protection issues.

38. Although the school's behaviour policy involves a complicated framework of rewards and sanctions, in practice the school uses an effective, simpler system which is well understood by staff and pupils. Pupils particularly appreciate the opportunity to earn house points and follow with enthusiasm the progress of their house in weekly competitions. Circle time is used effectively to pick up topics identified by the class teacher, as, for example, when a Year 6 class discussed friendship issues. There are few incidents of harassment or bullying and they are dealt with swiftly by the school. The school has satisfactory systems for monitoring pupils’ personal development. A good feature is the extra support given to pupils with social or emotional problems, which includes the use of an external counsellor.

39. The school has satisfactory systems for recording and monitoring attendance and punctuality. The recent change to a computerised registration system enables the school office to issue teachers with a weekly printout for closer monitoring of absences. Reasons for absence are sought and, where required, the school works constructively with the education welfare service.

40. Current practices for assessing pupils' academic progress are satisfactory. Children in the foundation stage are given “baseline tests” and appropriate use is made of these to plan work. The progress of pupils at Key Stage 1 is beginning to be tracked, based on initial assessments in the reception class and on end of key stage test results. A good range of data has been recently collated at Key Stage 2 to provide clear information of each pupils’ attainment and what they are expected to achieve by the end of Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics. Throughout this key stage, pupils carry out tests which indicate how much progress they have made during the year. At the end of Key Stage 2, this analysis is used to set targets for pupils’ attainment, which are both challenging and achievable. The targets have been broken down into smaller ones so that pupils understand what they need to learn next in order to raise their own attainment. In science, a good analysis of test results has been used to identify gaps in pupils’ knowledge and, as a result, adapt the curriculum. Although teachers use their own methods there are no agreed systems for assessing or recording pupils’ progress in other subjects. This lack of consistency limits teachers’ ability to carefully track progress or for co-ordinators to identify strengths and weaknesses in these subjects.

41. Pupils who have special educational needs are appropriately identified. An initial record of concern from the class teacher is shared with the special needs co-ordinator. Relevant educational programmes are drawn up and monitored effectively by the co-ordinator and class teacher. Reviews establish

whether a pupil should receive more specialist help or come off the special needs register. These procedures ensure pupils are well supported and make good progress against their targets. Pupils who learn English as an additional language are assessed regularly and suitable support given so that they make satisfactory progress.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

42. Although most parents are currently satisfied with the school, several have been unhappy about past leadership and the quality of some teaching. There is a concern about whether the many recent improvements will be carried forward when a new headteacher is appointed. Parents feel comfortable asking questions and nearly all are confident that their children are happy. They are broadly satisfied with the progress their children are making and believe that the school helps their children become mature and responsible. The inspection confirmed parents' positive views. Inspectors support parental concerns about homework. In some classes it is used well, but in others even pupils complain that they are not set enough.

43. Parents express some dissatisfaction with the information which they receive from the school on their children's progress. Although the information provided to parents is satisfactory overall, with regular newsletters and information on topics to be studied in class, inspectors agree that pupils' reports should be improved. Published as an annual record of achievement, reports detail what each child can do but they draw heavily on standard phrases, some of which are not readily meaningful to those not well versed in educational jargon. They do not give parents the information they would like on how well their children are doing in comparison with national expectations. Although the records of achievement do include some targets for improvement, these are often not well focused.

44. Contacts with parents of children under five are good and include home visits. Parents of children with special educational needs are fully involved in the reviews of their statements. The special educational needs co-ordinator holds a very helpful weekly "surgery" for those parents who wish to discuss their child's progress. The support teacher for pupils with English as an additional language meets with parents to ensure a smooth transition into school.

45. A significant minority of parents feels that the school does not work closely enough with them. There is an active Parent Teacher and Friends' Association and the school is now welcoming of parent helpers in class, and volunteers to help with trips. There are regular parents' evenings, although parents are critical of the lack of privacy of those meetings which have been held in the school hall. Staff, including the acting headteacher, are usually available to parents to deal with any queries or concerns. In turn, parents support their children by encouraging them with their homework and by hearing them read. However, more than a third of those parents who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire, would welcome the opportunity to be further involved in supporting their children's learning. Although there have been recent improvements, weaknesses in homework and in pupils' annual reports reflect parents' concerns and show that this remains an area for development.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

46. Improvement in the overall leadership and management of the school was a key issue at the previous inspection. The school has had two changes of headteacher since then, and more recently, a change of deputy headteacher. Improvements in leadership are now being very successfully addressed. The very capable acting headteacher has a clear vision of the educational direction of the school. The head and acting deputy form a strong team who have identified the correct priorities for school development. These include the raising of standards, improving staff morale and competencies, and creating a positive ethos in the school. Although there have been many new initiatives and some

staff changes this term, the impact of the current good leadership is apparent. Staff morale and motivation is high. Teachers feel valued, there is a positive ethos and shared commitment to school improvement. Pupils spoken to during the inspection have a positive attitude and pride in their school.

47. The headteacher and deputy have rigorously monitored teaching and learning. As a result, clear targets for improvement have been set for teachers, and training needs identified. For example, extra training for a few staff in teaching mathematics was effective and was reflected in the overall good quality of numeracy lessons seen in the inspection. Other aspects of learning are being monitored closely. For example, a new format for teachers' planning has been implemented. These are checked closely by the headteacher and improvements in their use identified, such as clearer learning objectives for the various ability groups within classes. The recent monitoring of pupils' performance has been particularly effective. Action has been taken to raise attainment through such initiatives as setting and regularly reviewing targets for pupils judged to be under-achieving.

48. The contribution of subject co-ordinators and other staff with management responsibilities is being satisfactorily developed. Co-ordinators have a manageable, focused, monthly schedule of monitoring activities. All co-ordinators have produced action plans for their subject's improvement. Although these vary in quality they provide a good basis for further development, especially for co-ordinators new to their roles. The special educational needs co-ordinator provides good leadership. She monitors individual educational plans carefully and ensures that provision is adapted to pupils' changing needs.

49. The governing body has undergone many changes in the last year. Governors are fully aware of the problems the school has faced and are committed to its improvement, giving their full support to the present headteacher's initiatives. The chairman and vice-chair are regular visitors to the school and are well informed about developments. Members of the curriculum committee visit the school and monitor lessons. Statutory duties are met including those for appraising teachers. The headteacher has produced a lesson observation form to provide a focus for governors' observations. The school development plan is focused on raising standards and is being revised to ensure it has clearly identified targets.

50. Financial planning is sound. Expenditure is linked to priorities in the school development plan. Co-ordinators put in bids which are then considered by the senior management team. The principles of best value are applied to make the school more efficient. Estimates and tenders are considered before making purchases. Assembly times were recently altered to make a better use of teaching time first thing in the morning. Office administration is efficient and forward looking. For example, the secretary is attending training on how to improve the presentation of budget summaries to governors. Appropriate use is made of information technology for school records and for initiatives such as the Virtual Education Action Zone. The money granted to the school for special educational needs is spent effectively to support pupils' progress.

51. There is an appropriate range of staff expertise to cover all aspects of the curriculum, including special educational needs. A generous number of support assistants are usually effectively deployed, but there were occasions in the inspection when some classes, particularly in lower Key Stage 2, would have benefited from extra help. Newly qualified teachers have had good support this term. This includes regular monitoring by a "mentor" and observations of teachers in other schools. As the school is in a period of change, with many new staff, it is not currently in a strong position to train new teachers. The school buildings and grounds are attractive, spacious and well maintained. Extra rooms including two halls and an information technology room enhance facilities. A refurbished, newly stocked library, has a satisfactory range of good quality books. Overall, there are sufficient learning resources.

THE WORK OF THE DYSLEXIA UNIT

52. The Designated Dyslexia Unit currently provides local authority funded support for one pupil who has a specific learning need. The Unit makes very good provision for this pupil, and by extending its work into the school, for fifteen other pupils with special needs. The unit is soon to extend its work to other schools in the area. As part of an “outreach” system staff will support identified pupils.

53. The quality of teaching and learning in the Unit is very good. Careful plans are drawn up to meet the needs of each pupil. These are based on comprehensive assessments which are carried out by well-qualified staff. The pupils make very good progress. Teachers and learning support staff explain lessons very carefully and make sure that the pupils understand their work. They develop pupils confidence and set very specific, achievable targets. Activities are timed which motivates pupils to better their previous performance. Pupils respond positively within the Unit. They are made fully aware of their individual lesson plans and this gives them a good understanding of what they are aiming to achieve. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good and promote a positive atmosphere for learning.

54. The unit is well managed. All staff work very hard to provide a calm yet vibrant learning environment for the pupils. The teacher in charge shares her expertise with colleagues and has an effective partnership with the special needs co-ordinator. They meet regularly to discuss individual pupil’s needs and decide on the most appropriate provision.

55. Although there has been a change of staff, the Unit has maintained the strengths identified in the last inspection report.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

56. In order to rectify the weaknesses identified in the inspection, the governing body, headteacher and staff should:

A. Improve the quality of teaching and learning *where there are weaknesses*, by:

- Increasing teachers’ expectations of the amount and quality of recorded work produced by pupils, particularly at Key Stage 1.
- Improving teachers’ planning, especially in devising strategies on how pupils’ different needs are to be met. Ensuring that the tasks planned consistently challenge pupils and reflect high expectations of what they can achieve.
- Making sure that different parts of lessons are timed to ensure there is a good pace to learning. Ensuring that introductions are not too long and there is adequate time at the end of the lesson for teachers to provide “feedback” to pupils and for them to discuss their learning.
- Ensuring classroom support staff are always deployed effectively in literacy lessons to maximise pupils’ learning.
- Improving teachers’ marking so that it is more rigorous in identifying basic errors, praises what pupils do well and offers better guidance on how they can improve.

(See paragraphs 18-26, 28, 58, 71, 77, 83, 103, 106, 110, and 113)

B. Raise pupils’ attainment in writing by:

- Ensuring that all teachers maintain the recent focus on improving pupils’ punctuation, spelling and ability to write in greater depth. Applying these skills consistently to written work in different

subjects.

- Rigorously monitoring work in all classes to ensure that teachers' expectations are consistently high, and taking appropriate action where they are not.

(See paragraphs 67, 70, 93, 96)

C. Raise achievement in information technology, especially at Key Stage 2, by:

- Ensuring all plans for training teachers are implemented so that they acquire all the expertise necessary to teach the subject to national standards.
- Pupils using information technology, as frequently as possible, as a tool for learning in different subjects.
- Devising a system which assesses pupils' skills and knowledge and which provides useful information for assisting with lesson planning.
- The co-ordinator continuing to monitor standards and providing support to staff where necessary.

(See paragraphs 99-103)

D. Adapt curriculum planning so that:

- It ensures that pupils in the mixed aged classes do not repeat or miss work.
- Timetables clearly show that the same amount of French is taught for pupils in different classes in the same year group.

(See paragraph 29)

E. Improve the contribution parents can make to pupils' learning at home by:

- Rigorously monitoring homework to ensure that all teachers are consistently following the school's policy.
- Ensuring that parents are clear about what homework has been set and when it needs to be returned.
- Checking that all teachers mark homework and let pupils know how well they have done.
- Improving pupils' reports so that they give better information on how well pupils are achieving in relation to national standards. Ensuring that the language used is clear to parents and that all areas where pupils need to improve are clearly identified.

(See paragraphs 26, 42, 43, 45)

Issues A, B and C are identified for improvement on the school's development plan.

Other issues the governors should consider for inclusion in their action plan:

- Improve punctuality by arranging for infant and junior pupils to start the school day at the same time. (paragraph 17)
- Plan more opportunities for pupils' spiritual development in lessons. (paragraphs 33, 113)
- Improve assessment and record keeping in religious education and the foundation subjects. (paragraphs 40, 90, 98, 114)
- Ensure the most able pupils are consistently challenged in science. (paragraphs 81, 83)
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to use research skills in the school library. (paragraph 69)
- Organise training so that staff can update their first aid certificates. (paragraph 37)

- Widen pupils' learning of other cultures. (paragraph 36)
- Improve outdoor play facilities for children under five. (paragraph 63)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	79
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	33

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	11	31	46	7	2	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	348
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	79
Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	8
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	128
English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6
Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	43
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	39

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.3
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	35	19	54

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	21	23	27
	Girls	15	17	16
	Total	36	40	43
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	67 (79)	74 (80)	80 (83)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	22	29	31
	Girls	17	16	16
	Total	39	45	47
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	72 (80)	83 (85)	87 (86)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (85)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	31	29	60

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	20	23
	Girls	20	12	18
	Total	38	32	41
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	63 (65)	53 (59)	68 (67)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (68)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	21	23	25
	Girls	18	14	15
	Total	39	37	40
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	65 (68)	62 (66)	67 (71)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	325
Any other minority ethnic group	13

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	37	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Average class size	29

Education support staff: YR– Y6

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	398

Financial information

Financial year	1999/200
	£
Total income	714103
Total expenditure	704703
Expenditure per pupil	1807
Balance brought forward from previous year	28459
Balance carried forward to next year	37859

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	358
Number of questionnaires returned	74

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	40	5	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	32	58	4	1	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	23	55	10	0	12
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	40	23	9	6
The teaching is good.	26	56	4	1	13
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	19	45	26	10	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	38	54	4	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	34	51	3	3	9
The school works closely with parents.	18	46	26	5	5
The school is well led and managed.	38	32	6	0	24
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	27	65	5	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	53	10	0	8

Other issues raised by parents

The effectiveness of the acting headteacher in making significant improvements to many aspects of school life.

The high quality of the school's accommodation and the good standard of cleanliness and maintenance.

Concerns about the future leadership of the school.

Not enough attention given to the teaching of average pupils, especially quiet girls.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

57. Children enter the reception class at one time during the year and attend either full or part time for the first term. Those children who are five before December have full time places after half term and the rest are part time until after Christmas. Currently, children enter school with skills broadly in line with those typical nationally, although in past years they have been slightly below this. The standard of education is satisfactory and the majority of children will achieve the early learning goals by the time they enter Key Stage 1, and some will exceed them.

58. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. The staff have good relationships with the children and provide activities covering all areas of learning. Teachers set appropriate expectations for children's behaviour and achievement, and encourage the children to become independent learners. For example, some activities are organised by the teachers and others initiated by the children. Staff carry out good detailed assessments, to give a clear indication of what children can do, know and understand. Assessments are repeated during the year to establish how much progress each child has made. This is good practice. However, these assessments are not used sufficiently to guide lesson planning which is unsatisfactory overall. The daily plans give little indication of how the entire curriculum is covered, learning intentions are sometimes unclear and which children will experience each activity are not identified. The role of the classroom assistants is usually clear and the support they give is effective. Those children who are in the mixed Year 1 and R class are well planned for. These children have access to all of the activities in the reception class and receive well-targeted help from a classroom assistant.

Personal, social and emotional development

59. The provision for personal, social and emotional development is good. The children learn to take turns and work together in an appropriate manner. They form good relationships with each other and with the staff. The children develop self-confidence, and are keen to learn and try out new activities. When listening in small or large groups they value what others say and make relevant contributions. The children behave well and understand how their actions affect others. Achievement is celebrated and all of the children are encouraged to praise each other.

Communication, language and literacy

60. The programme for developing communication, language and literacy is satisfactory. The children experience elements of the literacy strategy at appropriate times and much emphasis is put on developing thinking through role play and imaginative experiences. The children speak clearly and listen to each other. They are expected to explain their thoughts clearly and to speak to the whole class. Early reading is encouraged through taking books home and during story sessions which take place throughout the day. However, the book corner is small, the range of books is limited and they are not displayed well. Consequently, children do not choose to read books regularly. Letter sounds are explored and the children are beginning to understand about initial letters. Writing is developed through the literacy strategy and through role-play experiences. Some children write their names but those who are capable of writing simple words are not always expected to do so. Handwriting is well developed. The children learn to form letters properly and practise writing patterns.

Mathematical development

61. The programme for mathematics is good. The children count confidently to ten and beyond, and many recognise numbers and form them correctly. They identify simple shapes and learn to record

their work in books. They add and subtract small numbers in a practical way. Many activities ensure that the children experience pattern making and explore ideas such as big and small, tall and short. Through good role-play activities the children use money and apply their mathematical knowledge. Number rhymes and songs are used well to support the children's learning.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

62. Children develop a satisfactory understanding of the world around them. They investigate leaves and discuss the differences and similarities of colour. The children use lenses and magnifiers to look at various materials and sometimes record what they see. There are two computers available for the children's use and they are confident when moving the mouse and trying relevant programmes. The children have access to a wide variety of building equipment and they develop their skills appropriately. They have a good knowledge of moral and religious stories. They understand about special times such as birthdays and make many items to support their learning, such as cards. Children develop a sense of passing time, for example, by discussing past happy occasions.

Physical development

63. The provision for physical development is satisfactory. There is no designated outdoor play space for the reception class, but staff use the playground to give the children opportunities to use bats, balls and skipping ropes. The children use these confidently and become increasingly aware of the available space. The hall is used for work on larger apparatus and for movement to music. The children have access to a range of tools, including scissors, pens, brushes and glue sticks. They develop both large and small muscle control skills appropriately.

Creative development

64. The children have many opportunities to explore creative activities and the provision is good. They use a variety of materials to make pictures and collages, including glitter, tinsel and bright fabric. The children have access to playdough so that they learn to manipulate materials and make small models. The provision for music is especially good. The children explore loud and soft sounds and begin to clap rhythms. They sing a variety of songs tunefully and are confident when performing on their own. The provision for role-play is also good. The large area between the classrooms is used effectively to allow the children to have a large shop a home corner.

65. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The new curriculum for the foundation stage is becoming well established.

ENGLISH

66. In national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 in 1999, results in reading were well below average for all schools and for similar schools. In writing, results were below the national average. Results were similar in 2000. In both years results were influenced by one third of pupils on the higher levels of the special educational needs register requiring individual educational plans. In 1999 National test results at the end of Key Stage 2 were below average for all schools but above average for similar schools. Nineteen percent of pupils achieved the higher Level 5 in English overall, but only three percent of children achieved this level in writing. Results were broadly similar in 2000, but national comparisons were not available at the time of the inspection.

67. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils' performance in reading has improved compared with recent years, and is currently in line with the national average at the end of both key stages. Standards in speaking and listening are in line with national expectation by the end of each key stage. However, pupils' standards of writing, especially extended writing, remain below average.

68. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills in “circle time”, when pupils discuss an imaginative range of issues. Many topics are related to personal, health and social education, such as: ‘reflecting on change’, ‘name-calling’ and ‘group decisions’. Pupils in Year 2 were articulate and responsive, for example, when discussing the tell-tale signs of German measles. The very good policy for personal social and health education outlines ways of improving communication throughout the curriculum. Almost all lessons begin with question-and-answer sessions to focus pupils’ attention. Pupils gain familiarity with vocabulary specific to each subject. They listen attentively to instructions in class and sustain their listening very well in assemblies. In Year 4, pupils skilfully interviewed each other as part of an English topic on journalism. In Year 5, in religious education, pupils achieved good standards of speaking when they described the special nature of Jesus from the point of view of Joseph, Mary’s husband.

69. Pupils’ reading is now in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. Stocks of books have been increased and deployed around the school to raise the profile of reading. The good progress made by pupils with special educational needs and the continued impact of the literacy hour are factors in the improved attainment. Most pupils read regularly at school and at home. Pupils at Key Stage 1 quickly learn to observe punctuation and to make sense of what they read. They build up unknown words carefully. Several in Year 2 showed a strong sense of characterisation and observed speech marks with dramatic effect. By age 7, they know technical terms such as ‘author’, ‘index’, and ‘glossary’. Most pupils read books of an appropriate level of difficulty, but a few younger pupils had books which were too easy for them. Pupils at both key stages can use a dictionary, but some in both key stages do so laboriously. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have well-developed tastes in literature and name favourite authors. There are too few opportunities at present for pupils to use the library independently for research. However, this aspect of provision is being improved as the new library is coming into more regular use. Pupils use reference books confidently, but the skill of “skim-reading” to locate specific information is not well developed.

70. A scrutiny of pupils’ past work indicates that at both key stages written work is under-developed. However, there is clear evidence of recent improvement. Pupils are producing writing in a good range of styles, including scripts, poems, diaries and stories. A greater emphasis on written work is resulting in some extended, imaginative and technically accurate writing. Good examples of these were the ‘Desert Disaster’ stories by Year 6, Acrostic poems by Year 4 pupils, based on the word ‘harvest’, and Year 5 recipes written so that they could be more easily understood by younger pupils. However, these improvements are not evident in all classes. The need to spell and punctuate accurately has been insufficiently stressed. Titles and key words are too often mis-spelt. The development of writing across the curriculum has been inadequate, especially at Key Stage 1. There are good examples of extended writing in religious education and accurate technical writing in science. However, writing in history and geography is limited in quality and volume, and illustrations are sometimes left unexplained. There is only limited evidence of pupils re-drafting work to improve its accuracy and quality. Standards of handwriting are generally good

71. Teaching during the inspection was satisfactory overall at both key stages, but there was wide variation. It ranged from poor to excellent. In the excellent lesson, the teacher had carefully prepared a great variety of stimulating recipe books for the pupils to analyse. The teacher’s enthusiasm, both for English and for cookery, was very obvious. Tasks were varied to stimulate and challenge pupils over the whole range of ability. There was a very high standard of question and answer to ensure that the pupils clearly understood the purpose of the lesson. Instructions were given very quietly, which focused the pupils’ attention and established an atmosphere conducive to hard work. A learning support assistant purposefully supported a group of pupils with special educational needs. As a result, pupils produced substantial work of a high standard, in content and presentation. Most lessons are carefully planned and have clear objectives and contain at least some of the strengths outlined above.

Where the teaching was unsatisfactory or poor, the teacher's expectations were too low and the pace of learning slow. In a few classes, teachers and support staff did not intervene enough to re-focus groups of pupils who were not working hard. Consequently, they did not always achieve enough in the time. Some lessons had no deadlines for completing tasks, so the pace of learning was too leisurely. This was evident in a poor lesson where the teachers' expectations were low and pupils produced little work of appropriate quality. The quality of teachers' marking varies but is unsatisfactory overall. It gives little indication of how work could be improved.

72. The National Literacy Strategy is well established in the school. The co-ordination of English is very good. Two co-ordinators, new this term, have introduced thorough procedures for raising pupils' attainment, especially in writing, and for improving teaching. Monitoring of teaching and pupils' work is beginning to have a positive impact on standards. Teachers have received feedback and agreed targets for their professional development. The curriculum has been changed to give more opportunities for extended writing and plans for monitoring the effectiveness of teaching this aspect are identified in a good subject action plan. To support this initiative appropriate training has been provided for teachers. Assessment data from reading and other tests is used to set ongoing targets for pupils. Standards found during the inspection were broadly in line with those described in the previous report.

MATHEMATICS

73. Results in the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 were below the national average but average when compared with similar schools. Results were similar in 2000. Taking into account previously completed work, and the standards seen in lessons observed, current attainment is in line with the national average. The likely reasons for the difference between test results and the inspection judgements are the positive impact of the numeracy strategy and changes in the proportion of pupils with special educational needs. By the end of the key stage, the majority of pupils understand values in tens and units, order numbers up to a hundred, round up or down to the nearest ten or hundred, recall addition and subtraction facts to twenty and know their two, five and ten times tables. They understand halves and quarters and calculate half of a given number, such as half of fourteen is seven. Pupils know the correct mathematical names of two-dimensional shapes, for example triangle, rectangle, pentagon and hexagon, and classify them according to their properties, such as the number of their sides. They recognise reflective symmetry, and through practical activities, understand aspects of measurement and time.

74. Results in the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 were below average, both nationally and when compared with similar schools. Girls achieved less well than boys. There was a small improvement in the numbers attaining national expectations in 2000. The majority of current pupils in Years 6 are working at or above nationally expected levels. The implementation of the Numeracy Strategy and good target setting for pupils have all had a positive impact on standards. Work is well matched to pupils' needs within the ability sets in upper Key stage 2, and this is a significant factor in raised achievement, especially in Year 6. The school is aiming to have a few pupils reaching the very high Level 6 in end of key stage tests and has borrowed teaching materials from a local secondary school to assist with this. Year 6 girls have been grouped within a single set. Lesson observations show that this is currently an effective arrangement for improving their confidence and attainment.

75. Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils' mental mathematical skills are improving with daily practice of counting forwards and backwards, estimating, doubling and halving numbers, and recalling multiplication tables. By the end of the key stage, pupils show a sound understanding of multiplication and division, including decimals. Average and higher ability pupils convert fractions to decimals and to percentages correctly. They simplify problems, such as working out 17½% VAT mentally, by working out 10%, then 5%, then 2½% and adding them together. Pupils use the correct names for different

triangles and angles and measure angles correctly.

76. Overall, pupils with special educational needs make good progress at both key stages because they are usually well-supported in small groups.

77. The quality of teaching and learning observed during the inspection was good overall. It ranged from unsatisfactory to excellent. The best teaching was in the mathematics sets in Years 5 and 6. There were examples of good and very good teaching and learning in most year groups. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was in the lower half of Key Stage 2. In the best teaching the work is well planned to ensure it challenges pupils of all levels of attainment and reflects the teacher's high expectations. This was evident in a Year 3 lesson where a variety of activities ensured pupils made very good progress in using multiplication tables. In a Year 6 lesson, the teacher's pace of working and well structured lesson kept pupils productive and interested for the whole session, and they made excellent gains in their work on percentages. Teachers' good classroom management skills and assessment of pupils' understanding during lessons enables them to adapt their teaching and intervene as necessary. For example, in a lesson on trebling dart-board scores the teacher showed how their multiplication "table boards" would help. Overall, pupils concentrate on their tasks and listen attentively. This aids their learning. When teaching was unsatisfactory, planning was inadequate and tasks were inappropriate. For example, pupils in Year 4 were unable to complete the task of producing a magic square using the three times table, and made few gains in learning.

78. A solid foundation of basic skills is established at Key Stage 1. However, evidence from past work, and in a few lessons, shows that tasks at this key stage are not consistently matched to pupils' different levels of attainment. The setting of individual targets is starting to address this issue but teachers are not always being rigorous enough in clearly defining their expectations for different groups of pupils.

79. Mathematical skills are taught appropriately in other subjects. For example, in physical education, younger pupils explore bigger and smaller and in science, use graphs to record results and measure in units such as "Newtons". Accurate measuring skills are used in design and technology. An interesting application was observed in a personal and social education lesson, where pupils shared cards from which they asked each other mathematical questions and decided upon the answers.

80. The subject is well managed. There are clear improvements compared with the last inspection especially in pupils' progress at Key Stage 2. Regular, rigorous monitoring by the acting head and deputy headteacher has been a contributory factor to the overall good teaching. Assessment of pupils' progress guides curriculum planning and has been used well to set individual and group targets. Resources for mathematics are good overall and are well used to support learning.

SCIENCE

81. Results of 1999 tests at Key Stage 1 were below the national average but close to that of similar schools. The 1999 Key Stage 2 results were well below those of schools nationally and below those of similar schools. The school's results in the 2000 national tests show a significant improvement at both key stages, especially in the number of pupils reaching the expected levels of attainment. Inspection findings reflect these improvements and indicate that attainment at the end of both key stages is broadly in line with national averages. Overall, standards are higher than reported in the last inspection and most pupils make satisfactory progress. However, as reported then, the most able pupils are not consistently challenged to ensure they make the progress of which they are capable. Pupils with special educational needs are usually well supported and make good progress towards the targets set for them.

82. At Key Stage 1, pupils have an idea of ‘honesty’ in conducting investigations and how results are affected by changing one or more of the “variables”. Pupils understand some of the differences between natural and man-made materials and how bends and twists affect materials. At Key Stage 2 pupils have a good idea of what a ‘fair test’ is and how to control “variables” to test predictions. They set up simple procedures in order to solve a problem. For example, pupils in Year 4 successfully devise their own methods of separating four different solids mixed together. Pupils have a good understanding of the workings of the human body, for example the functions of the skeleton and the effects of exercise on blood flow.

83. Overall, the quality of teaching at both key stages is satisfactory. It ranges from unsatisfactory to good. A good feature of learning is the emphasis on investigative science which greatly helps pupils’ understanding of scientific methods. All teachers emphasise what constitutes a “fair test” and bring this out well in activities and discussions. For example, pupils in Year 5 quickly identified the reasons why some materials muffled sounds better than they had predicted. They explained how the pressure from their hands and the way materials were folded over the noise source affected their results. Pupils in Year 2, testing cars on different surfaces, soon appreciated what difference the length of push made and how difficult it was to repeat the same force twice. The focus on experimental work results in pupils enjoying their work and having a good attitude to science. Teachers invariably introduce lessons well by sharing the purpose of the lesson. They quickly engage the pupils’ interest. Examples of this include lively and amusing stories to start a lesson in Year 4 and the use of pupils as ‘guinea pig’ demonstrators and instructors in Year 2. Pupils work well together in groups. For example, pupils in Year 4 worked in small groups to devise a method for separating solids. Following discussions, they elected a leader and allocated different tasks to carry out the investigation. However, there were too few opportunities to develop independence in other lessons. This especially restricts the progress of the most able pupils. In weaker lessons, and in some past work, not enough tasks are planned to extend the knowledge and understanding of these pupils. For example, in Year 4 the task of devising a way of separating different solids was quickly accomplished by the higher attaining pupils. Resources and apparatus were available to build on what they had learned, but the opportunity to extend their learning was not taken. Time was not used well in a Year 6 lesson. The pupils quickly understood which substances dissolved in water but then spent unnecessary time working through many more examples. The recording of work at Key Stage 2 often extends to two or more sessions and becomes a protracted task.

84. The subject is being newly managed this term. Although it is too early to judge the impact of the current leadership, an appropriate action plan has been produced which includes rigorous monitoring of teaching and standards. The school has adopted national guidance for its scheme of work and from this has devised appropriate medium and short-term plans. This is an improved structure for planning which was a weakness in the previous inspection. In order to raise standards, the school has carried out a very detailed assessment of tests. This has identified those aspects of the subject which need to be improved and has led to appropriate changes in the curriculum. Insufficient use is made of information technology, for example, in the analysis and presentation of data.

Information regarding the subjects which follow

In many of the following subjects not enough lessons were observed to make a judgement about the overall quality of teaching. If enough lessons were seen the range in the quality of teaching is stated. Where possible, judgements about pupils’ standards are made based on past work and from discussions with pupils.

ART AND DESIGN

85. During the inspection no art lessons were observed. Evidence from past work indicates that standards are in line with those expected for the pupils' ages.

86. At Key Stage 1, pupils produce interesting observational drawings and collages using tissue, pasta and seeds. They have an appropriate understanding of mixing colours to produce a desired effect. For example pupils in Year 2 blend colours and apply crayons to complete pictures started with half photographs. These display a good eye for detail and appreciation of how the whole picture might look. At Key Stage 2, pupils develop their ability to make observational drawings and produce detailed sketches of figures in different poses. They combine different media to produce their own seascapes and landscapes in response to studying posters and photographs. In Year 4, pupils show considerable imagination in combining different papers and materials to make pictures inspired by the 'dreamcatchers' of North American people. These include representations of dream unicorns, ice cream dreams and a variety of imaginary animals. Different artistic techniques are used to enhance work in other subjects. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 design, sew and add materials to make Victorian Gloves and paint their own ideas of musical instruments, showing the fine detail involved. Pupils study and produce pictures and paintings in the styles of famous artists. For example, pupils in Year 6 paint well-observed pictures in the styles of Monet, Pissarro, Van Gogh and Renoir.

87. A recently appointed co-ordinator has plans for raising the levels of teacher expertise to meet the latest curriculum requirements. A sound action plan includes having an artist in residence to enrich pupils' learning.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

88. In nearly all aspects seen in design and technology, pupils' standards are similar to those expected for their ages. This is an improvement from the last inspection when pupils' achievement in the subject was unsatisfactory.

89. In Year 2 pupils understand the principles of "designing for a purpose" when making model vehicles. Examples of appropriate work are evident in most year groups. These include attractive working puppets in Year 4, a knowledge of "cams" to operate a toy in Year 5 and the use of textiles to make slippers in Year 6.

90. The quality of teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to good. A good feature of most lessons was the teaching of specialist vocabulary which increased pupils' understanding of the subject and contributed to their skills in literacy. For example, Year 3 pupils learn to use "mock up" "criteria" and "graphics" correctly and those in Year 6 talk about their "prototypes" and the "disassembling" of a slipper. In a good lesson at Key Stage 1, pupils' thinking was challenged by the use of "open-ended" questions such as "can anyone think of a material that can bend for the vehicle's roof?" Expectations were high. For example, the most able pupils were asked to review and suggest amendments to each other's work. Learning in a lesson for younger Key Stage 2 pupils was less successful for some pupils because parts of the design task were too complex. There are inconsistent methods for assessing and recording pupils' achievements. This means that teachers do not always have sufficient information to adapt tasks for the full range of attainment in their classes.

91. The impact of current leadership of the subject cannot be judged as a new co-ordinator has just been appointed.

GEOGRAPHY

92. No geography lessons took place during the inspection. An analysis of work indicates that

attainment is broadly in line with that expected nationally at both key stages. Standards are similar to those in the last inspection.

93. Pupils study a good range of places, finding out what conditions are and how they affect lifestyle. In Year 2, pupils learn about the island of Patmos. They locate features of the island using co-ordinates, and know why buildings and transport are suitable for the climate. In Year 4, pupils gain an understanding of geographical change through studying how Thanet evolved from being an island to forming part of the mainland. Pupils study water and the impact of climate in different countries, including Egypt. In Year 5, pupils consider the effects of pollution through categorising the kinds of rubbish produced in classrooms, and write original ideas for creating an environmentally friendly school. Pupils develop appropriate mapping skills. They start with the local area and as they get older learn to identify symbols on larger maps and atlases. Pupils apply their numeracy skills satisfactorily, for example, by using scale and graphs. However, too much of the written work lacks depth and does not contribute sufficiently to the development of literacy.

94. The acting co-ordinator has devised an appropriate plan for developing the subject in line with the latest curriculum requirements. The improved use of information technology and procedures for assessment are correctly identified as areas for development.

HISTORY

95. Attainment in history is in line with that expected nationally at both key stages. Standards are similar to those in the last inspection. Pupils gain a good sense of now and then through studying time lines and comparing artefacts from different periods with today's equivalents.

96. In Year 2, pupils compare hospitals in Florence Nightingale's day with what is found today. They understand diaries are a source of information and write their own "eye-witness" accounts of a chosen event. In Year 4 lesson about Henry V 111 pupils developed their research skills using a range of reference books and by analysing paintings for clues about his character. In Year 5, pupils study a good variety of aspects of Ancient Greece, including battles, Olympic Games, the theatre and Greek Gods. This leads to some good work in art. A very good drama lesson in Year 6 significantly enhanced pupils' understanding of the pressures on the poor during Victorian times. However, there is insufficient good quality written work at both key stages and this limits the subject's contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills.

97. The school supplements lessons with occasional visits and visitors to the school. A display and demonstration of authentic Victorian costumes and artefacts by a visiting expert during the inspection provoked great interest amongst Year 6 pupils. They gained valuable information about social and domestic life in the Nineteenth century. Quex House, an important museum, situated locally, is a very stimulating resource on Victorian life. Historical events, dress and customs featured prominently in the school's 150th anniversary celebrations in 1999, and in their millennium commemoration.

98. The co-ordinator communicates her lively enthusiasm for history to colleagues and provides them with useful advice and support. Schemes of work are being updated in line with the latest requirements. Assessment procedures are not developed and there is not a common system for recording pupils' progress. This weakness makes it difficult to measure the success of learning and provide information which could help improve teaching.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

99. Pupils' attainment is below that expected at the end of Key Stage 2 and broadly in line with

expectations at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils' recent progress has been good due to the successful use of a well-equipped information technology room. This only came into full use at the start of the current term and there is some way to go before it has a full impact on standards, especially at Key Stage 2. The further raising of attainment in the subject remains an issue for the school. However, compared with the last inspection, the curriculum now meets national requirements, resources have improved significantly and the subject is managed well.

100. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils present their ideas in different ways using information technology. They enter data from a traffic survey to produce pictograms, "paint" firework pictures using various computer "tools" and write stories using different typefaces. Pupils explore what happens to a floor robot when they program it to move in different directions. They confidently use a "mouse" to select items from "tool bars" and "drop down menus". By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils use spreadsheets to produce line graphs which compare the performances of men and women at the Olympics. They use sensors, attached to a computer, to record temperatures at night or sounds in the classroom. Pupils use word processing skills to draft stories and "cut and paste" pictures and different styles of heading to produce attractive covers for their science books. Pupils make satisfactory use of computers in English and mathematics and occasionally for research. Although all aspects of the subject are taught, pupils have not reached the required standard in several of them by the end of Key Stage 2. For example, pupils' use of computers in most other subjects is limited and they have not developed higher skills in exploring databases, using E-mail, writing instructions to control models or movement on the screen, and in creating "multi media" presentations.

101. Leadership in the subject is effective and focused on raising standards including those in the areas mentioned above. For example, contacts with a local college have been established so that pupils can use the "control" equipment there and a series of training sessions is arranged for staff to increase their expertise. Lessons are monitored and useful feedback given to teachers. A good feature is the spot check system where the co-ordinator surveys the use of computers based in classrooms at various times during the school day. Both these forms of monitoring are helpful in identifying strengths and rectifying weaknesses. The co-ordinator has correctly identified the need to introduce better procedures for assessing pupils and recording their progress. Teachers often give more-able pupils greater independence and deploy support staff well to help pupils with special educational needs. However, records do not clearly show the different levels of achievement and the targets set for different groups.

102. Discussions with pupils, and evidence from work this term, indicate that pupils' recent progress is good. The quality of teaching and learning observed during the inspection was mainly sound but ranged from unsatisfactory to good. A good feature of all lessons is the opportunity for pupils to work in pairs and discuss their tasks. This helps pupils' social development and improves their speaking and listening skills. In all lessons pupils showed good levels of interest and concentration.

103. In the best lessons, teachers successfully reviewed past learning with pupils. This helped remind them how to carry out basic procedures such as "logging" on to the system and using the various "tools". Most teachers quickly pick up and resolve any learning problems. For example, in an effective lesson at Key Stage 1, pupils were amazed to find that their pictures could be found on a different computer to the one they originally worked on. When they described this as "magic" the teacher corrected their misconception by explaining, in simple terms, the technology involved. Plenary sessions (the end of the lesson where pupils and teachers share their learning) are usually used well. In a Year 4 lesson the most able pupils explained how they found that a spell checker was not useful for correcting mistakes involving "homophones" such as "their" and "there". This was reinforced well by the teacher and helped all to understand the restrictions of a spell checker. In a less successful lesson the explanation by the teacher was too brief and the purpose of the lesson was not clear to pupils.

There was no session at the end of the lesson to review and share learning. Consequently pupils who had difficulties with their task did not have the chance to learn from others who had experienced success.

MUSIC

104. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection when music was a weakness. A new curriculum covering all aspects of music has been successfully implemented. A specialist room is being introduced with appropriate resources. Special class “packs” contain useful information for teachers and music for pupils to listen to.

105. Few music lessons were seen during the inspection. In those aspects of the subject seen standards were appropriate for the pupils’ ages. At Key Stage 1 pupils listen quietly to music and respond appropriately. They sing in two parts and clap simple rhythms. Pupils identify simple untuned percussion instruments and play these confidently. In assemblies, Key Stage 2 pupils sing in three parts, tunefully and with expression. Pupils extend their earlier knowledge of percussion instruments to tuned instruments and compose music based on simple repeating patterns. They become increasingly confident when appraising each other’s work.

106. During assemblies, teachers encourage pupils to listen attentively, perform confidently and sing in an appropriate style. In a good lesson at Key Stage 1, the teacher successfully involved all pupils and moved them quickly from one activity to another. This maintained pupils’ interest and all made good progress in their understanding of simple musical notation and long and short sounds. In the lessons seen, pupils were encouraged to discuss their work and to value each other’s contributions. However, one lesson at Key Stage 2 was too long and pupils’ learning slowed when they began to lose interest.

107. Appropriate extra-curricular activities support music. Some of these have a nominal charge, including those for recorders and keyboard. However, the co-ordinator runs a choir in which pupils confidently sing unaccompanied and this has a significant impact on singing throughout the school. The choir has opportunities for public performance; it recently participated in the Ramsgate Choir of the Year competition.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

108. Overall, standards in physical education are similar to those expected for the pupils’ ages at both key stages.

109. At Key Stage 1, pupils develop an appropriate awareness of space when investigating large and small movements. They understand the rules of safety and apply this to their creative work on apparatus. Pupils in Year 3 lack the ability to work calmly in pairs and need careful supervision when putting out gymnastic mats. Their attainment is below that expected. Year 4 pupils pass a rugby ball competently in small games and successfully join stretches and rolls in gymnastics lessons. Older pupils at Key Stage 2 demonstrate games skills above those expected for their ages. In small-sided games they show a keen awareness of space and tactics. Several after school clubs, and very good opportunities for competitive sport, significantly enhance pupils’ achievements. Many boys and girls are involved, for example, through different football teams and mixed rugby matches. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their particular talents. A good example is the cricket team which played many matches with a high degree of success. Swimming is being reintroduced this school year to meet National Curriculum requirements.

110. The quality of teaching ranged from satisfactory to good. In the best lessons, teachers “led

through example” by taking a full part in all exercise. The best teaching encouraged pupils to comment constructively on each other’s skills and consequently improve their own performances. In a Year 4 gymnastic lesson the quality of their movements improved as a result of such discussions. The skilled, voluntary help provided by the premises manager and one parent in lessons and clubs significantly enhances the quality of pupils’ learning. In a few lessons pupils were not always given enough information on how they could improve, and their learning slowed. For instance, in one lesson poor jumping and landing techniques were not corrected quickly enough. Teachers’ assessment and recording of pupils’ achievements is inconsistent and is not always helpful in planning for the next stage in learning.

111. The subject is managed effectively by a very well qualified co-ordinator. Skills are shared and good advice given as a result of monitoring. For example, pupils who have to miss lessons are required to evaluate the performance of others. Very good indoor and outdoor facilities enable pupils to experience a wide range of activities. All the positive aspects of the subject have been maintained since the last inspection.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

112. The requirements of the locally agreed syllabus are met and pupils are achieving standards in line with expectations for their ages. Pupils of all abilities make steady progress throughout both key stages. They have a sound knowledge of Christian tradition and beliefs. Year 2 pupils learn about Christian values through their study of the lives of saints, such as St Francis. In Year 3 they understand the significance of symbolism, for example the use of a candle, water and a white shawl in Baptism and in the different colours used in Church celebrations throughout the year. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 know the Bible stories relating to the birth of Jesus, explain their significance and develop a good understanding of different characters, such as Joseph, Simeon and Zaccharia. In Year 6, pupils are familiar with the Bible as a holy book, both in Jewish and Christian tradition. They understand the meaning of Bible stories, such as the story of Noah, and relate it to modern life. They showed good spiritual insight, both in their prayers, for the Rainbow of Hope, following the story of Noah, and in the psalms which they had composed, based on their study of the Bible. During the year, pupils learn about the traditions and celebrations in other world religions, such as Divali in the Hindu faith and the Passover in the Jewish faith.

113. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and some of it is good. Teachers have a good knowledge of Christian tradition, but are less secure in their knowledge of world religions. Moral values are well explored, such as in the study of the exemplary lives of saints, but in most lessons observed the spiritual aspect was not emphasised. A notable exception was the Year 6 work on prayer. In the best lessons, teachers plan well and use a variety of strategies very effectively to develop pupils’ understanding. These include searching questions and drama which helped pupils to understand the stories from different points of view. For example, the presentation of Jesus at the temple and the encounter with Simeon and Anna. On occasions pupils read long passages from the Bible, and this is unsuccessful in retaining their full attention. Teachers of parallel classes plan the purposes of their lessons together, but the quality of teaching, especially the expectations of pupils, often differ between classes in the same year group. For example, following a talk by a member of the clergy, pupils made rapid progress in one class where they had demanding written tasks matched well to their attainment. In the other class a drawing task did not challenge the most able pupils.

114. The new co-ordinator is building on her predecessor’s good management of the subject. By arranging staff training, she has ensured a smooth transition to the newly revised locally agreed syllabus. Monitoring of the subject has recently begun but its effects have yet to be evaluated. Teachers assess informally in class, but their records do not have a clear focus linked to the locally

agreed syllabus. This makes it difficult to evaluate pupils' progress and identify strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum. English skills are well-developed in lessons; these include good opportunities for speaking and listening and imaginative writing. Book resources are adequate, but artefacts and audio-visual resources used to support the teaching of Christianity and other world religions, are limited. The local church is used well as a resource when studying places of worship.